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Note verbale dated 7 March 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Angola to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Angola to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and has the honour to transmit herewith a concept paper for the open debate on the theme "The role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa", to be held on 28 March 2016 at 10 a.m. (see annex).

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Annex to the note verbale dated 7 March 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Angola to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept paper for the open debate of the Security Council on the theme "The role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa", to be held on 28 March 2016

I. Introduction

A growing body of evidence shows that women's participation in peace talks leads to the conclusion of talks, the implementation of agreements and the sustainability of peace.

In all three major peace and security reviews conducted in 2015, the need was emphasized for the Security Council to increase its focus on conflict prevention, in line with the Charter of the United Nations. In the three reviews, in particular the Council's high-level review on the implementation of its resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, it was also highlighted that the meaningful participation of women is crucial to the effectiveness of all peace and security interventions.

Recognizing the need for a paradigm shift in the way that the United Nations, Member States and regional actors address peace, security and the settlement of disputes, in particular in Africa, Angola, as President of the Security Council, will hold an open debate on "The role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa". The meeting is scheduled to take place on 28 March 2016.

II. Background

Throughout history, women peace activists from all over the world have united to try to put an end to war. Their call for a commitment to peace has been consistent and universal, even when their own countries have been at war.

The prevention of conflict is a regular item on the agenda of the Security Council, with a geographical focus on Africa. In its resolution 2171 (2014), the Council reaffirmed the need for a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and sustainable peace which covers both operational and structural measures for the prevention of armed conflict and addresses its root causes, including human rights and gender equality. It reaffirmed the important role women play in conflict prevention and resolution, and reiterated the Council's call to increase the equal, full and meaningful participation and representation of women in conflict prevention and mediation efforts in line with its resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015).

Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace — a Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325,[1] commissioned by the Secretary-General prior to the high-level review of the implementation of that landmark resolution of 2000 by the Council, highlighted the critical contributions women make to peace and security efforts when they are

[1] Available from http://wps.unwomen.org/.

meaningfully involved. An analysis[2] of 40 peace processes since the end of the cold war, conducted by the Graduate Institute, Geneva, for the *Global Study*, shows that, in cases where women's groups were able to exercise a strong influence on the negotiation process, the chances of an agreement being reached were higher than when women's groups exercised weak or no influence. The strong influence of women in negotiation processes also positively correlated with a greater likelihood of agreements being implemented. Moreover, additional research that examined a data set of 181 peace agreements signed between 1989 and 2011 also showed that peace agreements are 64 per cent less likely to fail when civil society representatives, including women's organizations, participate.[3] Specifically, in the case of inclusive peace processes, there is a 20 per cent increase in the probability of a peace agreement lasting at least two years, a percentage that increases over time.

Recognizing the role that women's organizations, as well as formal and informal community leaders, can play in exerting influence over parties to armed conflict, the Security Council, in its resolutions 2171 (2014), 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015) on women, peace and security, has called for the Secretary-General and his special envoys and special representatives, as part of their regular briefings, to update the Council on progress in inviting women to participate, including through consultations with civil society, including women's organizations, in discussions pertinent to the prevention and resolution of conflict, the maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peacebuilding.

III. Developments

Women's participation in conflict prevention in Africa has facilitated a more inclusive appreciation of the causes of and alternative solutions to conflict. Women's input with regard to conflict prevention continues to bolster actions that address varying needs, thereby creating broader buy-ins to peace accords and ultimately producing sustainable peace.

In Africa, several mechanisms, policies and structures have created an enabling environment for women to play a key role in peace and security. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol) and the 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa committed member States of the African Union to the full and effective participation and representation of women in peace processes, including the prevention, resolution and management of conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction in Africa, as stipulated in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

Also important are the African Union Gender Policy, which seeks to mainstream gender in peace and security, the appointment of a special envoy on women, peace and security, who plays a significant role in echoing the voices of women affected by conflict in Africa and advocating for their important role in

[2] Thania Paffenholz and others, "Making women count — not just counting women: assessing women's inclusion and influence on peace negotiations" (Geneva, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding, 2015), available from www.inclusivepeace.org.

[3] Laurel Stone, "Quantitative Analysis of Women's Participation in Peace Processes", in Marie O'Reilly, Andrea Ó Súilleabháin and Thania Paffenholz, *Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes* (International Peace Institute, June 2015), annex II.

prevention and resolution of conflict and peacebuilding, and the adoption of the five-year (2015-2020) Gender, Peace and Security Programme of the African Union. Further, women's participation and the consideration of gender perspectives are elements of the evolving African Peace and Security Architecture, including its Continental Early Warning System and the works of the Panel of the Wise, an advisory mechanism mandated to support the efforts of the African Union Peace and Security Council and those of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, particularly in the area of conflict prevention.

Women across Africa are playing unparalleled roles in early warning and the prevention of violence, including election-related violence, and they have developed innovative platforms for peaceful elections in several countries preparing for sensitive elections.

In West Africa, a joint initiative by local civil society groups, with support from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), has seen the development of women's situation rooms, declared a "best practice" by the African Union and adopted as a "solutions initiative" by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (see A/70/400). Also in West Africa, the partnership between UNOWA and UN-Women has facilitated the establishment of a vibrant network on women, peace and security which, equipped with mediation and resolution training, as well as shared tools, information, knowledge, best practices and lessons learned, fosters peace in the subregion and constitutes a springboard for the identification of gender experts who meaningfully participate in conflict prevention efforts and other national political processes in the region.

However, various obstacles continue to prevent the full integration of such endeavours into more formal interventions to prevent conflicts and build sustainable peace. Limited gender analysis of conflict and peace factors, sparse inclusion of both gender issues and women in early warning initiatives, and the perennial challenge of timely response to indicators of conflict often lead to crucial information, both from and about women, being ignored, where it could help devise comprehensive and sustainable response strategies.

Furthermore, the flexible rollout of their mandate by special political missions, including the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and UNOWA in Africa, which allows them to establish strong partnerships with other United Nations entities as well as regional and subregional organizations, has facilitated the emergence of a common approach centred on the search for political solutions and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Yet the limited number of women in field-based political missions, especially in leadership positions, and the marginalization of the women, peace and security agenda, pose the risk of restricting this agenda to a silo, away from technical and functional engagement with the core mandate of special political missions.

IV. Focus and objectives of the debate

It was emphasized in the *Global Study* that prevention requires both a short-term approach, which addresses women's participation and gender-based violations in early warning measures, and longer-term structural approaches to address the root causes of conflict, including inequality, and to address new sources of conflict, including the impacts of climate change on natural resources.

Following the renewed emphasis on conflict prevention and effective participation of women in peace and security initiatives, the open debate will contribute to ongoing efforts to integrate the women, peace and security agenda into conflict prevention, with a focus on Africa.

Key questions to be addressed will include:

- Security Council tools and working methods and women's participation in conflict prevention: the new Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security (see Security Council resolution 2242 (2015), para. 5 (a)), the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Security Council on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, sanctions regimes, accountability and the fight against impunity;
- The importance of a timely and effective response by the Council to early signs of conflict;
- Lessons learned and best practices for incorporating the women, peace and security agenda into conflict prevention in Africa: United Nations inter-agency cooperation;
- Enhanced assessment and analysis capabilities of United Nations special political missions for the integration of the women, peace and security agenda into their core preventive mandate;
- Women's participation in peace processes:
    - Overcoming barriers, expanding inclusion to the technical aspects of peace agreements such as the monitoring and implementation of ceasefire and peace agreements;
    - Strengthening skills and partnerships: networks of women mediators;
- Ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty (2013) and commitment to putting measures in place to address the gendered aspects of the international arms trade and the fight against small arms and light weapons;
- Cooperation with regional organizations, namely, the African Union; advocacy for gender issues to be considered as cross-cutting both by the Security Council and by the African Union Peace and Security Council; and for the inclusion of women, peace and security as a recurring agenda item at United Nations meetings with African Union counterparts, from technical to high-level political engagements;
- The links existing between development, peace and security, and human rights, and the recognition and integration of development concerns into security assessments to address the root causes of conflict;
- The importance of gender analysis and its integration into the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front initiative;
- The role of key actors, including Member States, the United Nations and civil society organizations;
- The importance of predictable and sustained funding for women, peace and security; capacity-building for women's groups and access to technology.

V. Format, participation and briefings

The meeting will be held in an open debate format in order to allow all Member States to discuss their views on matters pertaining to the item under consideration.

The open debate will take place on 28 March 2016 at 10 a.m. and will be chaired by the Minister for Family and Promotion of Women of Angola, Maria Filomena Delgado. The Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission are expected to attend and intervene at the beginning of the debate. Palegi Ayang (South Sudan) will make an oral presentation on behalf of civil society.